

A Prophetic Warning From the Holy Spirit

It is no secret that the spiritual environment in the world is undergoing a radical change. A great gulf is beginning to divide those who reject absolute truth and those who see what is happening and respond by renewing their commitment to the faith.

The winds of change are blowing, separating the wheat from the chaff.

Even identifying who is “wheat” and who is “chaff” can become a point of contention, depending on the group to which one belongs. Unfortunately, what we currently see and feel is only the beginning of the rift that is developing within the church world. Unless a major revival occurs, this rift will only grow deeper and wider. If repentance doesn’t melt the hearts of people throughout the church world, it will eventually seem like there are three churches:

- A church who holds fast to the truth and faces the brunt of opposition because it refuses to bend.
- A church in the middle trying to “ride the fence” through accommodation or compromise in order to avoid persecution and societal rejection (see Rev. 2:12-17).
- A lukewarm, “Laodicean-like” church (see Rev. 3:14-22) who has allowed compromise to run its full course, stripping it completely of the power of God and leaving Jesus standing on the outside.

It is not too late for the body of Christ to make a full recovery. In fact, it is never too late as long as there are believers who are willing to hear and hearken to what the Spirit is saying to the church. However, in order for the church to receive the divine power it needs for correction, change and restoration, it must undergo a transformation from

the highest to its lowest levels.

The Holy Spirit is prophetically warning His people that the only way they can thwart this impending dark spiritual season is to heed Christ's warning and apply His prescribed solutions found in His Word. Christ's words to all seven churches in the book of Revelation are vital for this top-to-bottom transformation.

However, this is especially true regarding Christ's message to the angel and congregation of Pergamum, who were under assault in the very area being discussed.

The cross is always the path for believers who have decided to walk the straight path with Jesus. The cross is never enjoyable, but it always results in resurrection. Therefore, believers today must be willing to face the cross and believe for resurrection power to flow through them—even if it means they have to suffer the brunt of a changing society that has no tolerance for people who hold to an exclusionary faith or to fixed moral absolutes. If the church has no fixed, non-negotiable biblical truths to stand on, it will simply become a spiritually weak humanitarian organization with a "Christian" philosophy that lacks the power of God.

In Jesus' message to the church of Pergamum, He commended the Pergamene believers who refused to be intimidated by the forces of darkness that were lambasting them from all sides, trying to make them abandon their commitment to the gospel (see Rev. 2:13).

These opposing forces took on a variety of forms for all early believers, ranging from strife among family members to communal ostracism to large-scale government crackdowns against the church.

However, despite the diverse ways in which this antagonism might manifest, these attacks against the early church were

all deeply rooted in one common defining characteristic—an adamant adherence to the system of beliefs collectively known today as “paganism.”

Now we are approaching the end of this age in an educated, highly sophisticated, and technological world, and we are witnessing a return to that pagan premise of the past that everyone’s belief system can be right. More and more, society has no stomach for spiritual or moral absolutes.

In fact, the public reaction to moral proclamations is often so adverse that many pastors today are hesitant to take strong positions on issues of morality, even though these truths are clearly stated in the Word of God. Rather than answer difficult moral questions, they dodge the questions and skirt around the issues in an attempt to avoid conflict.

We will discover that this is precisely what the errant leaders, whom Christ called Nicolaitans, were doing in Pergamum. Theirs was a doctrine of self-protecting compromise and accommodation with the pagan culture that surrounded the Pergamene congregation.

As a result, it is possible that the pastors and spiritual leaders in that city who decided to “take a stand” and preach the gospel in its pure, unadulterated form were labeled as irrelevant or intolerant hate-mongers.

Early believers endured bullying, ridicule, imprisonment and even death because they refused to conform to the pluralistic pagan world that surrounded them on all sides. The religious, social, cultural and political forces of the city exerted tremendous pressure to coerce these Christians into modifying their message to encompass a more moderate, inclusive view that would make them compliant with the spirit of the age. Although some believers collapsed under this pressure, many steadfastly resisted this coercion to conform and held fast to their faith.

In our time and the times to come, there is—and there will continue to be—a remnant of believers who will not bow to the pressures of society. Although many did collapse under the weight of these external forces in the early centuries of the Church, there were many who did not succumb—and who even chose to suffer rather than to violate what they believed.

God has always had His remnant who will not bow to external pressures, and in these last times, He will have that remnant once again. And those who refuse to fear or to compromise their faith in Jesus Christ will experience previously unknown levels of the power of God as a result of their commitment to stand by truth.

Regardless of the governmental and societal pressures that tried to sway early believers from a singular commitment to Jesus Christ and His Lordship, most of them held fast to the name of Jesus and refused to be lured into believing that Jesus was just another option in a sea of choices. The world may have been religiously pluralistic, but the church was not. Although society viewed Christians as narrow-minded simpletons, these early believers knew that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ, and they refused to surrender to the pressures of their culture and times.

*This is an excerpt from **Rick Renner's** soon-to-be-released second volume of his *Light in Darkness* series, *No Room for Compromise: Christ's Message to Today's Church*. This excerpt comes from Chapter One: "Paganism Then and Now."*